



EMC News

November 6, 2002

Volume 9, No.10

ADOPT A HIGHWAY

Submitted by Steve Nicholson

In mid October, Karen, Jeff, and Steve N. were able to clean another quarter of our adopted stretch along Route 13. It is really a wonderful experience, and an excellent opportunity to actually manage part of our environment.

Remaining to do is the last quarter section, and probably by now, a quick clean up of the entire 2 miles before the expected snow cover. All EMC members who have postponed their responsibilities may face inclement weather at the next effort, which will be scheduled at our November meeting. We need at least 8 people for one hour to finish for the season. I will provide hot chocolate, pre-heated hardhats, warm shuttle service, and encouragement.

ENERGY COMMITTEE

Submitted by Kenny Christianson

The EMC Energy Committee met on October 28. Two issues were NYSEG's "Voice Your Choice" initiative and the Local Action Plan for the Cities for Climate Protection/ICLEI program. The committee feels that the NYSEG plan is extremely vague and incomprehensible, and that a public education campaign of some type should be implemented. Consumers do not have enough information to make a good choice of electricity suppliers.

The committee will meet with the intern on November 25 to discuss strategies to implement Milestone 3 in the ICLEI process, developing a Local Action Plan. The meeting will be at 4:00 in the Court House conference room, second floor.

MUNICIPAL REPORT - Town of Ithaca

Submitted by Don Weir

The Town of Ithaca Conservation Board is presently working on the Unique Natural Areas (UNA's) of Coy Glen, Eldridge, Lake Slopes and South Hill. Work on these areas involves field reconnaissance, field reports, and suggestions to the Planning Board and the Town Council.

The Stream Buffer Ordinance is being put in its final draft form for the Town Planning board and the Town Council. This Ordinance is designed to aid in the stabilization and protection of Town of Ithaca streams and mitigate negative stream runoff and the associated problems of Town and County lands and waters.

A public information brochure for Conservation Board activities and responsibilities is being finalized and should be available shortly.

MUNICIPAL REPORT - Town of Newfield

Submitted by Donna Jean Darling

Water resources continue to be a prominent concern in the Town of Newfield. On Oct. 28 the LEAPE program on control and protection of local water resources was presented to the public and a software package is now housed at the Newfield Town Hall for the use of those interested and / or involved in this aspect of the environment.

At the last Town Board meeting, Dave Herrick, of T.G. Miller engineering and surveying, reported that although a third well has been drilled for the purpose of enlarging the water service in town, it has not proved any more satisfactory than the first one. The Board approved a motion to contact the Tompkins County Health Department for funding aquifer studies.

Look for a Municipal Report in the December EMC News from the Village of Lansing.

PESTICIDE NEIGHBOR NOTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Submitted by Steve Nicholson and Susan Brock

A public hearing and joint meeting of the Planning and Health and Human Services Committees on October 17 regarding the Neighbor Notification Law (NNL) was well attended. Those present remarked how well informed the crowd of 50 was. Public sentiment by those who spoke at the hearing was in favor of the law by a margin of 25-8. EMC members who spoke in favor of the law were Joyce Gerbasi, Herb Engman,

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and Susan Brock. Most County residents who spoke are strongly in favor of the law. Most of those who oppose the law are from the lawn care industry. Many of the lawn care industry opponents came from Albany or from other locations outside the County.

On October 30, the Planning Committee voted 3-0 to bring a resolution before the BOR recommending that Tompkins County adopt the NNL. The BOR will decide at its November 6 meeting whether to schedule a public hearing. If a hearing is scheduled, then it will be held on December 3, followed by the vote. If no hearing is scheduled, then it is unlikely the BOR will consider this issue further this year. The BOR needs to opt-in to the NNL before December 31 for it to take effect in 2003.

Steve Nicholson produced an information sheet showing how easy it will be for commercial applicators to obtain the needed address information of client's neighbors required to be notified 48 hours prior to pesticide application. Using the Tax Assessment Office's GIS computer program, he estimates it will take less than 5 minutes per client to generate an address list and print mailing labels. The NNL Committee will provide detailed instructions, mail them to all local lawn care companies, and make this information available at the EMC office and the Tax Assessment Office.

We will also be a part of the planned educational outreach effort concerning the NNL, as public awareness of pesticide use remains our primary goal. If the County opts in to the NNL, the EMC and Cornell Cooperative Extension may play a role in the law's educational outreach component.

WHAT ARE "GREEN TAGS"?

Prepared by Kenny Christianson

"Green Tags" are a mechanism to create a market for the environmental benefits provided by the use of renewable (or green) energy sources. When electricity is generated using traditional sources such as coal or oil, a vast amount of pollution is created, especially carbon dioxide and sulfur and nitrogen oxides. Electricity generation is the leading cause of air pollution in our nation. By using renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, or small hydropower, we avoid the external costs that would have been caused by traditional sources. By avoiding these costs we provide health and environmental benefits to others, but users of green electricity are seldom compensated for these benefits they are providing to the rest of us.

Technically, Green Tags, also known as "tradable renewable certificates", are defined as the environmental benefit created for every 1,000 kilowatt hours of renewable energy that is generated.

Green Tags give a method to help compensate those who are providing benefits to others through their use of green energy sources. A Green Tag allows the buyer to purchase the environmental attributes of a renewable energy source. For every kilowatt hour of electricity produced through photovoltaic or wind sources, environmental benefits are created through the avoidance of polluting sources of electricity. Green Tags create a market for these environmental benefits.

When an organization or individual purchases a Green Tag, they then own the environmental attributes created by a green energy source. The buyer can either keep the green tag herself, thus "retiring" the tag and getting credit for the pollution reduction herself. Or the buyer can sell the Green Tags to another organization that can then claim the environmental attributes for themselves.

The economic rationale for Green Tags is that they lead to the least-cost methods of pollution reduction. Say, for instance, that a steel mill desires to reduce its emissions of carbon dioxide due to regulatory, social, or public relations concerns. One solution may be to install its own pollution control equipment, which may be very costly for each ton of carbon dioxide reduced. Another solution is to pay someone else to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide through the purchase of their Green Tags. In this way carbon dioxide is still reduced, though in a more cost-effective manner. If it is cheaper for the steel firm to reduce its own emissions, then it will install pollution control equipment on its own. If it is cheaper for another firm to reduce its emissions, then the steel manufacturer can encourage this by purchasing the other firm's Green Tags. In this way carbon dioxide is still reduced, but in the least costly manner.

There are several criticisms which have been levied against Green Tags. First, they may create "hot spots" of pollution in low-income areas where residents cannot afford to purchase Green Tags. Second, the overall level of pollution reduction may not be as great as under command-and-control types of regulations, as those contained in the 1972 Clean Air Act. Finally, if a generator of renewable electricity sells their Green Tags, they can no longer claim the environmental attributes for themselves.